

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GUATEM 01023 171902Z

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /089 W

-----180155 082143 /14

R 171747Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4872

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELIZE

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1023

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BH, GT, PBOR

SUBJ: BELIZE

REF: BELIZE 113

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. GUATEMALAN REACTION TO ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANS TO ESTABLISH BELIZE DEFENSE FORCE HAS BEEN QUITE MODERATE. FOREIGN MINISTER MOLINA TOLD PRESS FEB. 15 THAT "ORGANIZATION OF BELIZE ARMY DOES NOT CONSTITUTE ANY TYPE OF THREAT FOR GUATEMALA NOR DOES IT CHANGE OUR POLICY OF CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS WITH GREAT BRITAIN. NEVERTHELESS, SINCE BELIZE HAS A BUDGET OF \$42,000,000 FOR THIS YEAR, OF WHICH BETWEEN \$15 AND \$20 MILLION ARE PROVIDED BY ENGLAND, IT WOULD BE MORE SUITABLE FOR BELIZE TO DIRECT ITS EFFORTS TOWARD DEVELOPMENT RATHER THAN TO THE MAINTENANCE OF A MINI-ARMY."

2. MOLINA ADDED THAT THE BELIZE DISPUTE DOES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO WORSEN THIS YEAR BECAUSE THERE ARE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES WHICH COULD PRECIPITATE AN INCIDENT. HE REITERATED THAT IF THERE IS A UNILATERAL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 GUATEM 01023 171902Z

DECISION THAT PREJUDICES GUATEMALAN INTERESTS (I.E., GRANT OF INDEPENDENCE TO BELIZE), THEN THE COUNTRY COULD NOT EVADE ITS HISTORICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND A CONFRONTATION COULD RESULT.

3. MOLINA SAID THE NEXT NEGOTIATING SESSION COULD TAKE PLACE IN MARCH, BUT THE DATE HAS NOT BEEN SET

BECAUSE TED ROWLANDS HAS BEEN BUSY WITH RHODESIA, THE FALKLAND ISLANDS, AND NOW THE ILLNESS OF FOREIGN MINISTER CROSSLAND. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THROUGH THE NEGOTIATIONS A FORMULA WILL BE SOUGHT TO SATISFY THE VARIOUS INTERESTS, INCLUDING THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION AND THE WISHES OF THE BELIZEAN PEOPLE, WHICH DO NOT ALWAYS COINCIDE WITH THOSE OF GUATEMALA.

4. MOLINA ALSO COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON THE FEB. 15 DEPARTURE OF FOUR PR CONGRESSMEN FOR BELIZE, SAYING THE VISIT WOULD INCREASE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

5. IN HIS FIRST COMMENTS ON BELIZE SINCE BECOMING MINISTER OF DEFENSE, GENERAL OTTO SPIEGELER TOLD REPORTERS FEBRUARY 16 THAT PROJECTED BELIZEAN ARMY IS ILLEGAL BECAUSE BELIZE IS GUATEMALAN TERRITORY. HOWEVER, IT DOESN'T WORRY GUATEMALA BECAUSE IN ANY EVENT BELIZE WILL BE UNABLE TO SUPPORT AN ARMY. "THE ARMY OF GUATEMALA IS PREPARED TO RECOVER BELIZE BY ANY MEANS TO REINTEGRATE IT INTO THE NATIONAL PATRIMONY". SPIEGELER ADDED THAT THE BELIZEAN ARMY PROBABLY IS OR WILL BE MADE UP OF MERCENARIES DUE TO THE UNQUESTIONABLE TIES BETWEEN GEORGE PRICE AND FIDEL CASTRO. THE BELIZEANS ARE GREATLY BOTHERED BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO BECOME A COMMUNIST COUNTRY AND MAJOR FUNCTION OF NEW ARMY MAY BE TO PRETECT PRICE AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

6. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. IN A LUNCHEON WITH THE BRITISH CONSULATE STAFF FEB. 15, EMBOFFS FOUND CONSENSUS THAT WHILE PROSPECTS ARE NOT GOOD FOR ANY SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GUATEM 01023 171902Z

NEGOTIATIONS THIS YEAR, NEITHER DOES ANY "CONFRONTATION" APPEAR LIKELY. THE GUATEMALANS WILL BE PREOCCUPIED WITH THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE BRITISH ARE NOT DISPOSED TO PRESS THE ISSUE FOR THE TIME BEING.
BOSTER

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